

Message Text

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ACTION AF-08

INFO OCT-01 EUR-12 ISO-00 IO-13 CIAE-00 DODE-00 PM-04 H-02

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FM AMEMBASSY PRETORIA

TO SECSTATE WASHDC 4824

INFO AMCONSUL CAPE TOWN

AMCONSUL DURBAN

AMCONSUL JOHANNESBURG

AMEMBASSY LONDON

AMEMBASSY LUSAKA

USUN NEW YORK 1257

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EO 11652 N/A

TAGS WA PINS MILI

SUBJECT WINDHOEK NEWSPAPERS TIFF WITH DEFENSE FORCES

BEGIN UNCLASSIFIED

1. WINDHOEK ADVERTISER APPEARED JUNE 22 WITH LARGE FRONT-PAGE AREA BLANK AND MARKED "CENSORED". EDITOR J.M. SMITH SAID (IN ARTICLE PUBLISHED NEXT DAY) HE HAD BEEN DISCUSSING SECURITY SITUATION WITH SENIOR DEFENSE OFFICER, HAD OUTLINED GIST OF ARTICLE HE INTENDED TO PUBLISH, AND HAD BEEN TOLD NOT TO DO SO ON PAIN OF BOTH COURT AND SECURITY ACTION TO CONFISCATE THE ADVERTISER. DEPT OF DEFENSE MOVED JUNE 22 ALSO TO STOP FURTHER DISTRIBUTION OF GERMAN-LANGUAGE ALLGEMEINE ZEITUNG OF JUNE 22, EDITED BY KURT DAHLMANN, CHARGING THAT PAPER WAS PRINTING CLASSIFIED DEFENSE INFORMATION. BOTH PAPERS OWNED BY JOHN MEINERT (PTY) LTD. OF WINDHOEK.

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2. IN FAST-MOVING SERIES OF ACTIONS, DEPT DEFENSE SUS-

PENDED ITS AGREEMENT UNDER WHICH INFORMATION IS PROVIDED TO THE PAPERS BASICALLY IN RETURN FOR PROMISE NOT TO PUBLISH ANYTHING TO WHICH DEFENSE OBJECTS. SMITH EDITORIALIZED THAT HE HAD WANTED ONLY TO KEEP PUBLIC INFORMED OF FACTS TO COUNTER THE "RUMOR-MONGERING, GOSSIP AND HAM HANDEDNESS OF THE AUTHORITIES" WHICH WAS UPSETTING PEOPLE. PRESIDENT OF SUPREME COURT OF SWA, WHILE PROHIBITING PUBLICATION OF ANY DETAILS OF HEARING ITSELF OR SUBJECT MATTER CONCERNED, RULED JUNE 23 AGAINST DEFENSE DEPT'S EFFORT TO STOP DISTRIBUTION OF JUNE 22 ISSUE OF ZEITUNG, SAYING IT SEEMED CLEAR THAT DAHLMANN HAD NO INTENTION OF COMPROMISING DEFENSE INFORMATION BUT WAS SEEKING TO REASSURE PUBLIC.

3. DAHLMANN SAID THAT SENIOR DEFENSE OFFICER HAD LATER CALLED ON HIM TO DISCUSS IN FRIENDLY FASHION THE WORKING OUT OF SOME NEW FORMULA IN WHICH PAPER COULD AGAIN RECEIVE DATA DIRECT FROM FORCES. SMITH, SAYING THAT MINISTER OF DEFENSE BOTHA'S TERMINATION OF PRESS AGREEMENT WAS EVIDENCE OF CLUMSY HANDLING OF POLITICAL DIRECTION OF DEFENSE FORCES, SAID HE WOULD CONTINUE TO PUBLISH INFORMATION AVAILABLE TO HIM IN THE PUBLIC INTEREST, RELYING ON HIS LAWYERS FOR ADVICE INsofar AS POSSIBLE LEGAL PROBLEMS INVOLVED IN PUBLICATION OF SECURITY ITEMS WERE CONCERNED. END UNCLASSIFIED

4. (LOU) COMMENT: REPORTS OF PENETRATION OF SWAPO GUERRILLA GROUP FOR FIRST TIME INTO AREA SOUTH OF OVAMBOLAND HAD ALARMED POPULATION. THOUGH THIS PORTION OF NEWS HAD BEEN PUBLISHED IN WINDHOEK AND IN SOUTH AFRICA, THE WINDHOEK PAPERS HAD WANTED TO PUBLISH INFORMATION ABOUT THE CALLING UP OF LOCAL COMMANDOS TO MOUNT A LARGE-SCALE SEARCH FOR THE GROUP. IT APPEARS THAT A LARGE SEGMENT OF THE POPULATION WAS ALREADY AWARE OF THE STEPS BEING TAKEN ANYWAY, WHICH INFLUENCED COURT'S DECISION THAT NO HARM HAD BEEN INTENDED OR INDEED DONE. BOTH PAPERS CONTINUE PUBLICATION AS USUAL, INCLUDING NEWS ON THE SEARCH FOR GUERRILLAS (SEPTEL).
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